

THE UNEARNED INCREMENT AND CROWN LEASES.

The term "unearned increment," made use of in our article on "Hurry-up on the land" in the policy of the Government, appears to have aroused the ire of our correspondent "John O'Groat," to quote an alarming extent. The term, we may remind "John O'Groat," was used in the report of the Royal Commission, which highly respectable body favoured the view that the said "unearned increment" ought rightfully to be accorded to the tenant. A tenant is, of course, equitably entitled to the value of his improvements; but to give him in addition what is every increase of the value of the land, for any reason, or for any extraneous causes for which he is in no way responsible is a proceeding for which there is as yet no justification in law and certainly none in the doctrine of natural right. But what, asks our correspondent, is meant by the unearned increment? It need not go far to explain that. It is the increase of value. There have been cases in Hongkong where capitalists, anticipating their rise in the value of land which has actually taken place, bought up all the land they could, so that when the value rose, they could mean while allow them and do as little as they possibly could for the improvement of the property, in some cases not even allowing the land to be cultivated. Their profits may fairly be called an "unearned increment."

The land question has no necessary connection with socialism, and certainly not whatever when it is Crown land that is being considered. A letter on the subject of the same name, and apparently appertaining to the part of Mr. HERRARD'S address. We regret that we have not got the letter but we would be glad to see it. It is a very interesting one, and we would be glad to reproduce for our correspondents' benefit, but, as far as we remember, the position taken up by the distinguished philosopher was that while, if a free community could be made, it would be a fair compensation for the loss of private property in land, yet having regard to the many rights that have grown up under the existing system and the enormous amount of money that would be required to buy out the landlords, the nationalisation of the land in England now would be tantamount to a robbery of the people. It is, he said, impossible, would not be desirable to enter on such a project. Hongkong, however, is in the position of being able to start afresh, so far as the land still undisposed of is concerned, and all that we claim is that it should be administered for the benefit of the community with the same regard to the rights of the individual as the landowner would exercise in the administration of an estate for his own benefit. Herein we take it, "John O'Groat" agrees with us as he favours the periodical revision of Crown rents previously advocated in this column.

With regard to land already alienated, we have no objection to interference with the terms on which it has been granted. It was because we conceived that the Praya Reclamation scheme could not be carried out by the Government without interfering with these terms in respect of the water frontage that we advocated its being carried out by the Chinese Government. There were not a few people in the Colony who would disclaim the name of socialist, who yet, seeing there was a profit of a few

millions of dollars going, thought the right of the lot-holders should be treated with scant regard in order that the profit might be secured for the colony at large. The Government has a tendency toward socialism, but the *Daily Press* was in the opposite camp.

Our correspondents say:—"Your argument carried to its logical conclusion involves the destruction of capital altogether." Quite the contrary. Capital represents the accumulated savings of the community, and is due to the results of his labour. But land is not properly speakable capital and cannot be considered in the same category in philosophical discussion, although it is not always easy to draw the distinction in practice. Broadly speaking, however, the special right of the State over the land is recognized, as allowing the community to regulate the use of the land, to improve it, and in the case of Ireland and the Highlands the State goes so far as to limit the rent which the landlord may demand from the tenant. Our correspondent is particularly unfortunate in his illustrations. "How far down are we to go?" he asks. "The answer is, down to the bottom, there is found, as in that mine in New Zealand, and you have just told us about, and we holders of Puntum shares have seen find, eight ounces of gold to the ton, is it community to come in and claim it, saying the land belongs to the people?" This, I understand, is what always has been the case with the silver mines, silver mining substituting "the Crown" for the people, and the principle was asserted so recently in the case of the gold mine in Wales, the owner of which was not allowed to work it until he had come to terms with the Government. In the case of Puntum, also, a Government has to be paid to the Sultan, and the owner has only been granted for a limited term.

Coming back to Hongkong, however, as the application of the principles commenced by our correspondent and ourselves, may be useful to remind buyers of land that they are buying leases in perpetuity. The Land Commission in their report said:—

"Before very long it will be necessary that something should be done in reference to the leases for 99 years. The Government have been dealing with the leasehold estates with the 15 years' leases granted in the early days of the colony, when the lot-holders were not aware that the term of their leases was within a measurable distance; readily which the term was extended for a further 15 years, and so on, until the term of 99 years became well do nothing toward repair, or in the improvement or enhancement of their dwellings; if it were possible to extend the expiration of the term to as much as they would be. No one has been able to do this, and the Government have been bound to let 15 years' lease only, with the idea of giving the lot-holders a right of re-entry, after the term of 15 years and then turn out."

The leases, however, while they do not appear to be turned out, must look forward to a reasonable term towards the expiration of the term, bringing it up to the figure the Government is reasonably willing, allowance on a liberal scale being of course made for the leases for improvements. This ought to have been the settlement arrived at in respect of the lot-holders, instead of extending the leases to 99 years.

CHANG CHIE-TUNG AND OFFICIAL PECCATIONS.

Whatever may be the demerits and p^{er}judices of the late Governor, Chang Chie-tung, he is by no means an ideal ruler—his ability was certainly not one of his vices. He did not enjoy unqualified popularity in the Colony. He was certainly not a man of the people. During his administration as Viceroy, because he was compelled to levy additional taxes to provide for the cost of his defence, the new Mint at Canton was closed, and the Government's lower officials were restricted in their expenditure, and the Government's operations by a wholesome fear of refection and punishment. Opportunities

course arose during the occasional absorption of His Excellency in his favourite

in the western district may be traced to the insanitary condition of the densely-inhabited native quarter situated immediately below. This insanitary condition of the Chinese quarter has been neither temporary nor accidental, as evidenced by the fact that the same district was occupied. Any unhealthiness of the European houses attributable to that cause must therefore be characterized as permanent and chronic rather than the result of a temporary and accidental nature. But Mr. Brown says that the health of the localities in question did not compare unfavourably with last year with that of the other districts. This argument he seems to have arrived at by different and irreconcilable conclusions. One of his own impressions is that except in one or two individual cases the houses from which the complaints which led to the appointment of the Fever Commission came are situated on levels too elevated to be directly affected by the filth which is thrown in China streets under these conditions are.

Although Europeans were affected to some extent it was the Chinese servants who were the chief sufferers at the time in question and the Surveyor-General recommends that if the existing laws do not already effectively provide for the proper construction of Chinese quarters and the removal of their refuse, the Government should cause the Public Health Ordinance to be supplemented by an enactment to ensure buildings suitable for human habitation and for the prevention of overcrowding. It is very necessary that powers of this kind should exist to meet cases in which the so-called "vanta" quarters are not what they ought to be, but as a matter of fact we believe that it is now little to be feared that the outbreak of fever in 1898 having been sufficient in its nature to attract the attention of property owners to what was defective. With regard to the soil drainage Mr. Brown says there is no land in the neighbourhood that can be regarded as of a marshy nature, but as much of the soil is of a surface nature exposed to the sun and wind it is not unlikely that it may be so dry and so hot as to receive or subsoil water into the nearest unliab. But, he adds, "the greater part of these lands is situated on private property, and I am not aware that legal power exists for compelling lessees of Crown land to drain their gardens and compounds." Private residents, however, would probably be found very willing to join in any scheme for the drainage of the neighbourhood, and the Surveyor-General's most suggestive recommendation is that the Commission that Mr. Brown deals with should regard the proposal that all public works and private building operations involve the earth-cutting should be limited for one or two years as varying on the basis of the most practicable. If these measures were more generally established it might be deemed desirable to carry out the proposal, incontinent as the course would be, but the matter is, to the least of it, still in a state of doubt, as the excavations are frequently carried on with perfect immunity from disease. Mr. Brown agrees with the commission, however, that all newly-cut work should be covered with a layer of soil.

On the question of leprosy, the Surveyor-General refers to the failure of an encephalus as a preventive of fever.

seems to think that on the whole trees are more harm than good. "However grateful the shade of trees on the public roads may be," he says, "and while admitting to the fallacious idea that malaria comes from the grounds as well as from the relief they afford from the sun's rays, their use should be subordinated to other considerations; for preventing the roads from drying after their surface is injured, the cost of maintaining them is increased, and the locality is rendered more humid." While the Fever Commission looked at the question from a health point of view, not as affecting the state of the roads. The roads of the Colony, it must be admitted, are in a disgraceful condition, but it will be time enough to the effect of trees on them when the Public Works Department has pointed out the necessary remedial measures.

At present the shaded and unshaded portions are equally bad. Nor do we think that in any part the trees are so thickly planted on the roadsides as to produce a deteriorating effect on a well made road which should be so constructed as to quench any discharge by the rain.

It is not to be supposed that means instead of allowing it to sink into the ground. For the latter is the case the trees by the absorption of their roots must make up for the great exert for whatever diminution of the sun's rays they may cause by the obstruction of the sun's rays. As to the effect on the air, it is to be hoped by what means instead of trees is a cause of malaria or otherwise it is absolutely certain that an excessive vegetation in the form of jungle or dense scrub, is in hot climate, associated with the deadliest forms of disease; and to mention that in Cyprus he has known houses surrounded by thick well-watered gardens shaded by the thick foliage of orange and other trees that the soil was not sufficient exposed to the sun's rays. Naturally in planting care must be taken that the soil does not keep the sun off well-watered gardens in mountainous districts to hinder the sun to sweep the effect of the air of the island and of trees for shade upon the roads we think there can be no doubt whatever. The Fever Commission composed entirely of medical men, recommended planting in the Western district and there is evidence to show that the malaria in Hong Kong is not of the type as it was before the process of afforestation was commenced. Even a slight reduction of the temperature in a tropical climate must necessarily have a very beneficial effect on the public health. Excessive humidity of the soil is an evil which in Hong Kong is not confined to the exceptional and situated localities, need hardly be taken into consideration, the natural drainage of the hill slopes preventing any dangerous that direction.

"FOOD IN THE TROPICS."

LLECTURE BY DR. CANTWELL.

On the 20th, January, 1907, Dr. Cantwell delivered a lecture on the "Problems" to the Hong Kong Literary Society. In opening, the lecturer said the food we got in Hong Kong was the least varied of any kind from that obtained in any other part of the world. The food in form was the staple food. Here we had no rice except food; although of course the people had rice.

THE WART OF NOURISHING MEAT AND RESULTS.

Taking most first, the lecturer referred to his hearers that flesh and mutton were the most common food of the tropics, and tender we called it flesh, when it was hard and tough we called it mutton. Beef, beef, the best we got in Hong Kong was the best we could get. The Chinese and the European must find it simply a question of life. In the case of

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of	Gunner Rivers, G. T.	10	10	20	30	35
	Gunner Hops, E. R.	10	10	20	30	35
in	Corporal Powell, J.	15	0	15	17	20

Points awarded		Total	
Rank and name	shot.	shot.	shot.
Gunner Josephs	8	10	18
Gunner Levy	8	10	18
Gunner Walder	10	0	10
Gunner McCormack	0	10	10
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